News release

Hurricane season update

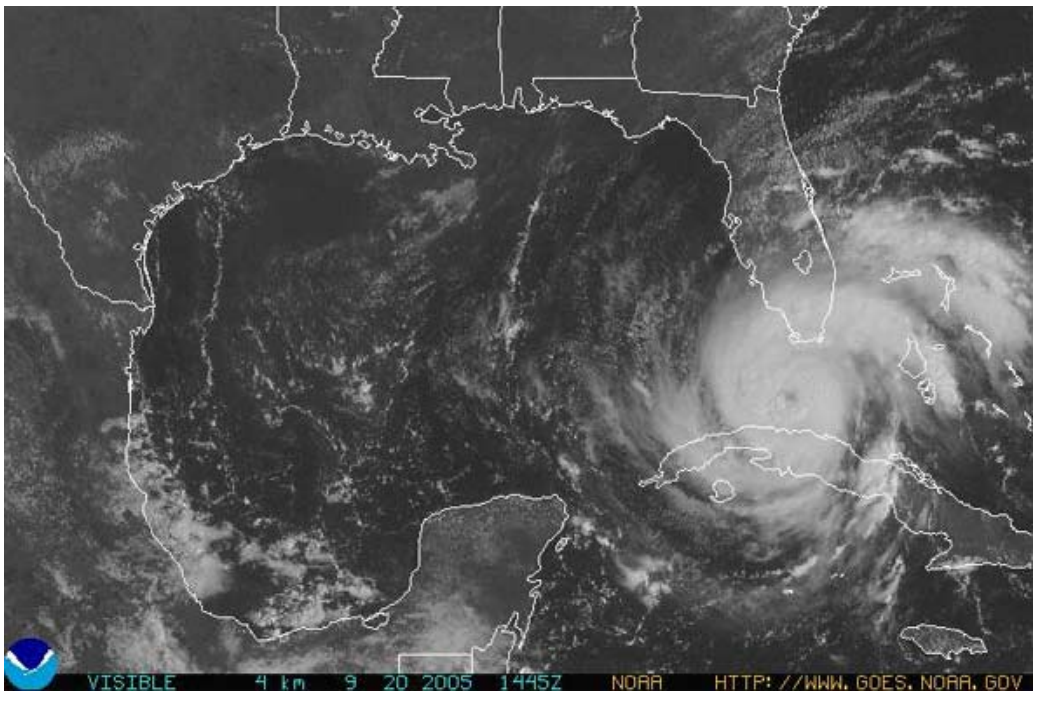
20 September 2005

The 2005 hurricane season for the Atlantic was predicted to be one of the most active, and this year could see a record number of tropical storms.

In early August, with the season already under way, Colorado State University issued a forecast for 20 tropical storms - ten of which would reach hurricane strength. In fact, there have been 17 tropical storms to date, with Hurricane Rita - the ninth hurricane of the season - about to move into the Gulf of Mexico.

The record number of hurricanes in one season is 12 in 1969, while 21 tropical storms were recorded in 1933. Although November marks the official end of the hurricane season some storms can occur as late as early December, so it seems likely that these records could be toppled this year. With only 21 names nominated for each storm season it also means that the National Hurricane Center (NHC) in Miami will need to resort to using letters of the Greek alphabet should the record be broken.

Satellite image of Hurricane Rita:



The latest storm advisory from the NHC for Rita favours a Texas landfall, most likely in the early hours (UK time) of Saturday, 24 September. The hurricane is predicted to increase to at least a category 3 on the Saffir-Simpson Scale as it crosses the Gulf and concerns are naturally rising over the threat to people and the many industries located in the area.

Official bulletins are issued by the NHC, but the Met Office freely exchanges data with its colleagues in Miami to provide the fullest possible information. The Met Office also has a responsibility to issue regular briefings to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to ensure that Britons abroad get the best advice of the potential dangers.

Latest tropical cyclone advisories

More about tropical cyclones

Notes:
Hurricane strength is defined on the Saffir-Simpson scale noted below:
Category 1 sustained wind speeds of 74 to 95 m.p.h.
Category 2 sustained wind speeds of 96 to 110 m.p.h.
Category 3 sustained wind speeds of 111 to 130 m.p.h.
Category 4 sustained wind speeds of 131 to 155 m.p.h.
Category 5 sustained wind speeds greater than 155 m.p.h.

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